Letter from the church of Christ at Dartford in Kent.

London, 1656.

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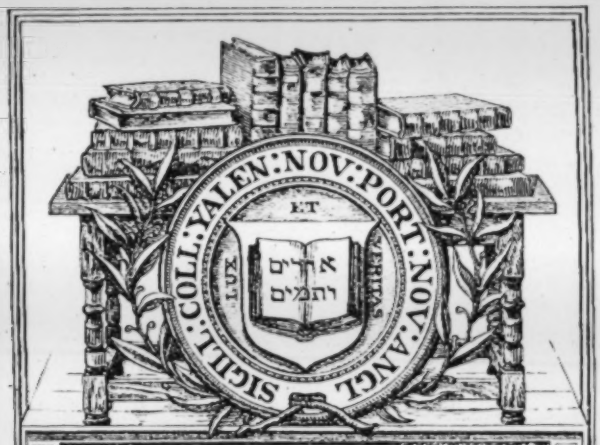

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A LETTER

FROM THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST

AT

DARTFORD

IN

KENT.

To all the Assemblies of Saints, and Faithful ones in Christ Jesus, that are hoping for Salvation by freee Grace through the Merits of a Crucified

CHRIST.

LONDON:
Printed for their use. 1656.

for
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The 4th. Moneth, 11th. day, 1656.

To all Aſſemblies of

SAINTS AND FAITHFVL ONES IN CHRIST JESUS

That are hoping for Salvation by free Grace, through the merits of a crucified Chriſt.

The little Church of Chriſt at Dartford *in* Kent *ſendeth Greeting.*

DEAR BRETHREN:

OUr Prayers to the Father for you, are that grace and peace may be multiplied unto you and all the *Iſrael* of God, with all fulneſs of bleſſing from the fountain of free grace; which not according to the wil of the fleſh, or of men, but of God, is freely and fully given, whoſe bleſſed free grace, we above all others have

cauſe to admire in theſe ſinning backſliding dayes of our own, and the Nations wherein we live; under the apprehenſion whereof we deſire in our ſouls to lye low, and mourn before the Lord, bearing his indignation becauſe we have ſinned againſt him, and when with *Job* we remember the time paſt in which the candle of God ſhined, wherein we with others of the Lords people followed him in the Wilderneſs, and our preſent ſtate compared with it, we are bowed down to the duſt, and deſire to pour out our heart-ſadning thoughts into your boſoms (as to faithful and fellow-feeling members) of that declining in the Lords people from their firſt works.

Remembring what mourning like the Doves of the Vallies was in every poor ſoul over its own iniquities, flowing from ſincere affections to the Lord; what joy over poor ſinners converſion, and labouring in it, with love to Chriſts affairs, ſtreamed from the hearts, appeared in the faces and actions of Saints; what care to keep their garments unſpotted, not to provoke the Lord to anger; how much bleſſed thankfulneſs for the leaſt crumb of mercy, appeared in the thankful converſation of Saints; how deeply did they take the leaſt reproof from God, and never give him reſt til he turned again; how ſlow in judging one another, and ſtrong in the bond of love were Saints held in that day, which was indeed the bleſſed Spring-time of theſe Nations mercies.

But how ſoon is a ſad winter, yea even a famine come upon us, in which is neither ſeed time, nor harveſt, being not only deeply fallen, but ripened for Judgement, with hearts drunk in the world, aſleep in Atheiſme, cold in love and zeal to Chriſt and his affairs: are not almoſt all the Lords people contented with knowing much, but doing little anſwerable, forgetting our own particular, and theſe Nations mercies in general; yea we fear breaking Vows to God made in adverſity? how is that great mercy of breaking wicked mens yoak forgotten, when the vvretched court, its Creatures, and the Epiſcopacy, oppreſſed the poor people of the Lord in *England*: a mercy, that ought to have been engraven upon all our

heart

hearts, is little prized; that if the Lord prevent not, we are given up to the ſame again: &what readines to the accurſed works of *Cham*, diſcovering Saints weakneſs as if not concerned to mourn for their ſins? how hath a ſpirit of diviſion ſeized on all, which if ſearched into, we fear would be found not to ariſe out of tenderneſs of ſpirit? for ſurely that would have produced more abundant labouring in all meekneſs to turn others from their evil wayes, and not to have caſt off the care of thoſe ſtraying ſheep that have wandred on a thouſand hils, which how little it is laid to heart amongſt all other the Lords reproofs, at leaſt wiſe not ſo, as to ſmite upon the thigh and view our vvay in the valley.

And as the fruit of theſe, we are ſmote with blaſting and mildew, bringing forth little in our Labours; ſince our firſt love is loſt, hath not the Lord ſtrengthned the hands of thoſe which formerly could not have ſtood before us abroad or at home? and though ſome have ſinned more viſibly? yet ſurely all of us have come ſhort of rendring again according to the enjoyment of ſuch Goſpel-ſhining mercies, inſtead whereof the Lord hath ſuffered (for a thorn in our ſides, and to our ſouls grief) the great enemies of a ſpiritual Miniſtry, that old brood of *Babylons* Merchants to remain almoſt in every Pariſh, ſtealing the Word from their neighbours, and ſelling it to the poor people for gain, having nothing of the power of godlineſs in them, nor ſpirit of Prophecy, continuing ſadly to harden poor ſouls by their examples and practiſe; how is the Spirit of a powerful Goſpel miniſtry ceaſed? and how hath the bleſſed name of God been blaſphemed, and pretious Saints ſet at naught through the ungoſpel-like carriages of others, yea impriſoned to the joy of the Lords enemies, Forraign and Domeſtique? and yet to this day vve fear, not one ſin of this kind hath been laid to heart, which wil ſurely be pleaded againſt in Gods time, and who can ſay, ſome ſuch offence againſt Saints hath not been upon him, conſidering the carriage towards thoſe upright ones in the old *Parliament*, the little *Aſſembly*, and at this day? and although looking on the dark ſide of Saints, it may be

judged

judged no evil, yet when God brings them to the light we may ſee how like *Edoms* ſpirit this hath been as a farther Judgement, how hath the accurſed ſpirit of the Jeſuits taken effect in theſe Nations, a great ſnare being laid, but not in the ſight of people, bringing their deſigns to paſs, ripening themſelves for Judgement, of which Prophecies fulfil: things haſten to the Birth, but there is no ſtrength to bring forth.

While we therefore look forward, we your poor Brethren beſeech you with ſinglenes of heart to remember from whence you are fallen, repent and do your firſt works in the old ſpirit of that bleſſed cauſe in vvhich you vvere firſt engaged; ſtand faſt in the foundations of Faith, be ſtrong in the Lord in this evil day, and to this end be often before the Lord in thoſe duties of Faſting and Prayer with us your poor vveak Brethren.

Whoſe ſouls deſires are, that the Lord vvould pour out a mighty ſuitable Spirit into his people for his great vvork, and ſuddenly come to his Temple as a Refiners fire, yet purging away and pardoning the tranſgreſſions of his people, and recal thoſe poor ſouls that are fallen, whether in or out of Power, in whoſe repentance he can abundantly glorifie himſelf, and make us know that there is hope in our end, leading us to, and uniting us upon bleſſed grounds, in our old ſpirit and Cauſe that the Lord blaſt us not, but delight to build us up, and make this *Valley* of *Achor* a door of hope; gather the outcaſts, the Halt, Blind, & Lame, and lead us that our feet do no more ſtumble on thoſe dark mountains, and that he would ſtrengthen our Faith while enemies are high, and have laid their deſigns deep, that with *Joſhua and Caleb* we may go forward towards the good Land, in which are bleſſed grapes, even to arrive at thoſe glorious promiſes made to Chriſt, and the Iſrael of God, rendring vengeance upon the ſeat of the beaſt, the Whore, which ſits as a Queen, ſaying ſhe ſhal know no ſorrow, and ſeems to be forgotten, and cal out his ſanctified ones againſt her, and if it be his wil, make uſe of this Iſland from ſtep to ſtep in that great work that

that vve judge is to be done in theſe our dayes.

The affections to which, and the whole *Iſrael* of God, is that which hath made ſo poor a Remnant adventure to offer theſe our hearts ſearchings which the Lord hath often made us preſent before him, and now being overcome with earneſt deſires to the vvelfare of the Lords people, vve are made vvilling to bear the juſt cenſure of the vveakneſs hereof, and the malitious rage of ſouls drunk in the World, aſleep in Atheiſme, vvho vve expect vvil kick at us, but our refuge and Record is on high, vvho otherwiſe are the loweſt and unworthieſt of all the Lords people, but in Chriſt Jeſus your endeared Brethren:

Signed in the Name, and by the appointment of the little Flock at Dartford *in* KENT.

Rob: Powell, Sam: Ravin.

READER:

THis is aſſented to by all the Church there preſent, none Excepted, at ſeveral Faſting dayes, and ſigned only by two, that the number of Names might not give offence unto any.

FINIS.